

On Gay Porn

Michael Lucas[†]

I. GAY PORN: VIOLENCE AND LIBERATION

Pornography is often accused of promoting violence against women and, more generally, the subordination of women by men. It is argued that these films depict, endorse, teach, and normalize violence against women, male dominance, and female obedience, which, in turn, are said to be both cause and effect of sexism, misogyny, and patriarchy. We are, then, called upon to condemn all porn and restrict its availability. Men predominantly run the adult entertainment industry and many heterosexually oriented films do indeed manifest control, humiliation, violation, and objectification of women.

Pornography, however, is not so simple. It is not a monolithic enterprise, and we must complicate what is in fact a complicated subject. What, for example, can porn do to or for gay men?

I do not consider myself an expert on all aspects of porn. But I am very well situated to address what porn can do, and indeed does, to and for gay men. I star in and create porn for the homosexual consumer, specifically man on man, and do not deal with any pornography that includes women as sexual subjects.

In my experience, gay porn can act to liberate as well as educate a historically closeted segment of society. Information and ideas about “straight” sexuality run freely through society; gay expression, however, is often silenced or otherwise unavailable. People are just presumed to be straight; sex is presumptively heterosexual. Rather than being oppressive, gay pornography can validate homosexuality and create community. It can be an outlet, perhaps the *only* outlet, for one’s desires—desires that are generally suppressed if not condemned by society as a whole. For instance, a young gay person struggling with his sexuality may find porn to be a safe way to explore and eventually come to terms with his fantasies and feelings.

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Dominance and power are also uniquely manifested in gay porn.¹ Simply put, the “top” is the active player, aggressive and dominant, and is typically serviced by the passive “bottom.” The bottom is also the receptive man during anal sex. In an effort to condemn *all* porn as producing sexism, some activists suggest that gay porn is merely a recasting of heterosexual sex—that is, the “top” represents the man and the “bottom” represents the woman.

But again, it’s not that simple. The most important distinction between gay and straight porn is the obvious fact that gay male porn is inherently and inevitably man on man, and at least in terms of gender, both sexual partners are equals. Each male participant chooses his role based on his desires. He can be dominant or passive or both.² Indeed, almost all of my films feature “versatile” models, a popular term that refers to a man who is both a “top” and a “bottom.” Moreover, in one of my films, a famous “top” model bottomed for the first time on camera. This kind of thing gets gay men excited—violence is not done to the bottom; he and his role are celebrated and sexy.

I know my models are enjoying themselves because a man cannot fake his sexual pleasure. If he is aroused, he will have an erect penis. If he is having an orgasm, he will ejaculate. The only way to have a good scene in a gay pornographic movie is if the models are enjoying themselves. It is also important to me that the performers choose their own roles and have a prior agreement with their scene-partner. If there is an occasional scene where one guy is more dominant, then he is asserting his dominance in a playful, softcore manner. Such behavior, per se, cannot be considered to be violence from one man towards another. In many scenes both guys are aggressive toward one another; mutual aggression is often what a gay man desires. Moreover, aggression in and of itself cannot be condemned.

II. THE ICONIC GAY PORN STAR

People long for celebrities and a person can be idolized for many reasons in today’s world. Porn stars can be icons and can develop a large following of fans, sometimes all over the world. Porn stars are idolized as the epitome of sexuality and representative of desires. Porn stars are also often seen as role models to gay men, which, in turn, confers upon them significant responsibilities. For example, a porn star can use his power to teach safe sex or unsafe sex. To depict unsafe sex, to glorify or eroticize barebacking or other

1. Because Lucas Entertainment does not make sado-masochistic films—although some gay pornographers do—I shall not consider such films here.

2. Some men are more into servicing another man; others like to be dominant. Some men enjoy being humiliated, spit on, and being roughed up; others are versatile. A bottom is not a victim by any means, because he is fulfilling his own desires. Moreover, a bottom can aggressively take pleasure as well as a top can passively receive pleasure.

unsafe behavior, sends a destructive message to the gay community, which is still recovering from the devastation of the AIDS epidemic. Alternatively, by strictly featuring safe sex in my movies, I show that sex can be great without drugs and while using a condom and playing safe. I aggressively push this message in the media, within my movies, and by speaking out on this issue whenever the opportunity arises. When people watch my movies, I want them to see men having a great time enjoying sex, visibly sober, and always using a condom during penetration.

Gay porn is also an important educational tool for men who have never had sex but are gay, gay men in search of new desires, and for the man who just wants to try something different. Because pornography sets out to show great sex, better sex than one might have in reality, porn can serve as a guide to new sexual positions, techniques, and desires. Many individuals aspire to have great sex in their life—a goal that porn can facilitate.

As I mentioned above, gay pornography especially plays an important role in displaying safe sex that is still very exciting. Many stigmas surround condom use. Common opinions are that condoms inhibit pleasure and stimulation. Since I only film penetration with a condom, any time a man uses one of my films to fantasize, he is fantasizing about the safe sex the film displays. Further, beyond setting an example to viewers, I would not exploit myself or my models by subjecting us to unsafe sex. Indeed, the health of my models is extremely important. When prospective talent begins work with Lucas Entertainment, he must fill out a form and answer whether he has ever engaged in any bareback behavior. If I find out that one of my performers has engaged in a bareback production, he is banned from working in my films. I also test my models for drug use before their scenes. I believe sex should be performed with a clear head and one hundred percent control over what you are doing. I also provide health insurance for my exclusive models and pay for their gym memberships. Healthy dieting is encouraged and I urge models to stay out of the sun. My films depend on male beauty, an aspiration only possible with good fitness and inner health.

III. THE QUIET WHISPER OF GAY SEXUALITY

Beautiful men engaging in hot sex shows something entirely different than the depressing or clownish gay characters often painted by Hollywood today. Gay men are rarely shown as a happy, healthy, strong, and successful people in mainstream film and television today. When a gay man is portrayed, he is usually sick with AIDS, mentally ill, schizophrenic, abused by society, confused, a clown, or an absurd stereotype. But at the same time, and ironically, gay men are depicted as walking embodiments of their sexuality (as

if “being gay” is the sum of what a gay man is), yet they are not allowed to actually be sexual. Aside from superficial jokes or tongue and cheek dialogue about dating, little expression of gay sexuality surfaces in television or mainstream films. Sadly, there is nothing sexy about the way gay men are represented in the majority of mainstream media today. It’s as if we’re told: “You can be gay as long as you make us laugh, help us be fashionable, or you are ill.” This is not liberation or acceptance or equality—not in the least. Unfortunately gay adult movies are the only dependable representation of gay life involving pleasure and excitement. In 2005, the mainstream film *Brokeback Mountain* finally featured a human portrait of homosexual love, but again, little room was left for happiness in the lives of its characters. Instead, the men of *Brokeback Mountain* are shrouded in a million problems. They are depressed, destroyed, confused, beaten up, and killed. While we ought not minimize or neglect to confront the violence committed against gay and lesbian people or forget AIDS, major media could do so much more.

Even major gay media and gay-rights organizations fear encroaching upon the very thing that is most distinguishing between homosexuals from heterosexuals: sex. In a quest to lure attention and tolerance from a historically homophobic society, gay media and gay rights organizations portray a completely sanitized version of a homosexuality. Gay television channels such as Logo, mainstream magazines such as *Out*, and organizations such as GLAAD, openly distance themselves from gay pornography. For example, I was once invited to a GLAAD event and was pictured there on the red carpet. At first, GLAAD included the picture of me on their website’s coverage of the event. Shortly thereafter, my picture was removed. Upset and feeling shunned by this, I contacted GLAAD. Through communication between GLAAD and myself, I have come to conclude that the picture was removed because GLAAD was nervous about associating itself with a porn star. This reticence surfaces throughout gay media. My experiences witnessing reactions to me and my work tells me that gay porn stars serve as relevant figures in gay society. By distancing themselves from gay sexuality, these organizations effectively stigmatize the porn star, his fans, and sexuality itself.

In a society dominated, sometimes plagued, by the overwhelming presence of sex, the gay community’s allowance of what amounts to quiet whispers of gay sexuality is astonishing. Fear resonates in the quietness of gay sexuality in media. Sex is a basic element of a human being and its absence is truly striking. While television and movies include more and more gay characters into their stories, gay sex and sexuality themselves are increasingly forgotten. Gay porn thus serves the necessary role of recording and expressing actual gay sexuality at the same time it endeavors to provide pleasure, educate, and engender sexual liberation.